

**Fiscal Year 2011-2012 Budget Address**  
**Mayor Harvey Johnson, Jr.**  
**Wednesday, July 27, 2011**  
**12:00 Noon**  
**Council Chambers**

Good afternoon!

President Bluntson, members of the City Council, city employees, citizens of Jackson, and friends; thank you all for being here today as we present the FY 2011-2012 Executive Budget for the City of Jackson. This document is now before the City Council for review, any adjustments and subsequent adoption on or before September 15, 2011. Proposed expenditures include \$123.9 million in General Fund appropriations, and \$142.8 million in non-General Fund appropriations, for a total operating budget of \$266.7 million.

This annual operating budget represents a \$10.7 million or 4 percent increase over the current year's operating budget of \$255.9 million.

There is also a \$39.9 million or a 44.3 percent decrease from the FY 11 Capital Budget. This decrease is primarily from obligating or expending bond funds on water projects, street paving, and other capital improvement projects in the current fiscal year.

The total FY 2011-2012 proposed budget is \$317 million which is 8.4 percent less than last year's.

We continue to maintain a frugal budgeting approach, focusing on becoming more efficient while delivering the level of services citizens need here in the city of Jackson. Our city continues to be recognized for our healthy economic development and business vitality, and I'm pleased that tax revenue has exceeded projections in this current budget year. However, we also had unanticipated fuel costs, increased police overtime, as well as several costly insurance claims that were a challenge in this budget year.

As we move forward into the new budget year, I've asked Department Directors to carry savings forward and basically work with a flat budget. I commend our Department Directors for continuing to work to save money, be more efficient with our limited resources and still provide adequate services for our citizens.

It brings me pleasure to announce that we **are not proposing a tax increase to the citizens of Jackson!** At the same time, we do not anticipate cutting any services, laying off any employees or instituting any furloughs to maintain this tight budget. Ladies and gentlemen, the city of Jackson has sound financial management practices as evidenced by what we have been able to accomplish so far, and we will continue to live within our means and maintain a stable financial outlook going forward!

Belt-tightening has become a reality, not only for those of us in City Hall, but also for our city employees and their families. That's why I am proposing an across the board pay increase for

city employees in this year's budget. Under this proposal, effective January 1, 2012, all full time city employees should receive a 2% across the board pay increase. We have dedicated public servants who provide vital, quality services to our citizens, and they deserve this small token of appreciation, during these tough economic times.

This proposal takes \$1.1 million from our Applied Fund Balance to fund this pay increase. This money is savings the city has realized on top of its standard reserve fund, and since employees have not had a raise since 2008, it is time we take this important step and fund this raise.

We are also subsidizing 68 percent of employees' insurance premiums, which amounts to \$800,000 more than last year. This helps keep more money in the pockets of our employees, but we must do more to get these insurance costs under control.

That's why I am committed to bolstering our employee wellness program. This year we formulated a wellness committee to come up with ways to promote healthier lifestyles for our employees. We had a wellness fair, we instituted the Fit Pick Program to give our employees healthier snack options in our vending machines, and we began a Let's Go Walking Jackson campaign to fight obesity and any number of other health problems.

We can get our insurance costs down with these efforts.

There are several major areas that we will focus on in this budget year that I would especially like to highlight today. These areas are by no means comprehensive of all the important, ongoing initiatives and projects that are included in this year's budget, but these six areas highlight some important priorities of my administration. They are:

1. Improving Technology,
2. Public Safety,
3. Improving our City's Appearance,
4. Infrastructure,
5. Jobs for Jacksonians, and
6. Economic Development

### **Improving Technology**

Ladies and gentlemen, I have made a commitment to right-sizing government to become more efficient with our resources so that we can provide a high level of quality services that our citizens deserve. One of the ways we can right size government is to continue to improve our technology. Technological advances bring ease of use not only to our employees, but to our residents – and many of the advantages of new technology increase revenue and create greater customer satisfaction, not to mention making transactions, services and follow through more efficient.

This year, we will be hiring a third party to develop a comprehensive Information Technology (IT) Strategic Plan that will look at the entire city government technology processes and

infrastructure. We also intend to begin immediately implementing recommendations from this Plan.

Nearly 10,000 residents have used 3-1-1 since its launch and we will be making additional enhancements to this innovative tool in this budget year.

We will implement our Court Management System which will allow the Police Department and Court Services to share information about tickets, warrants and other information more quickly.

And, we will be extending the City of Jackson's Fiber Optic infrastructure to provide more network connectivity to city facilities.

We believe that we must focus more on technology as a means to enhance the way we do business and signal to our citizens that we are moving our business processes forward to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### **Public Safety:**

Public Safety remains a top priority of this administration. We must continue to ensure that our efforts to fight crime not only continue to lower crime, but that our citizens feel their safety quotient is raised, as well. We have made some important progress in this current budget year, and beginning in October, we will be holding a new police recruit class. In fact, we are going to conduct three police recruit classes in the 2011-2012 budget year. This will ensure that we have an on-going effort to meet our goal of putting at least 500 police officers on the streets.

We are also hiring five part time 911 operators to beef up our 911 call center and improve our response time.

We are hiring five new detention officers for our Adult Detention Center.

We are hiring eight security officers for city facilities which will double the number of officers and allow us to take over security at Union Station.

I'm also excited to announce that we are creating the position of Corporal in the Jackson Police Department that will be available for all officers with ten or more years of service. By creating this rank of Corporal, we are rewarding our experienced officers and again providing a clear career path for our police officers, which will continue to boost morale. Equally as important, this rank will provide an automatic pool of experienced officers that could potentially add an important level of supervision.

We have recognized a need to increase beats in precincts that have added population, in order to ensure that our officers are visible, and can cover the area assigned to them, and can respond to crime quickly and effectively. We've already added two beats to precinct one and this budget will allow for the addition of two beats to precinct four.

We will continue the trend of purchasing technology to aid us in fighting crime here in Jackson. Our Police Department has been successful in getting grant dollars to purchase new technology and we will continue this trend by purchasing thirty e-ticket writer devices this year that will assist Jackson Police officers in issuing tickets and recording violations. These hand-held devices will ensure that tickets are transmitted to our Court Services Division more quickly, and that we get violations processed more efficiently and accurately.

We will also be holding a new recruit class for firefighters this year, and we will even be adding an additional six firefighter positions to the department, boosting our numbers even higher to ensure we are providing the best possible protection to our citizens.

We are also increasing the number of Emergency Medical Technicians in the Fire Department by twenty-five in this budget year. This will give us 85 EMTs for the entire department.

Additionally, we will be putting a certified paramedic in each of the three fire districts.

### **Improving our City's Appearance:**

We are also going to focus on the appearance of our city facilities and city-owned lots. In this budget year we are going to tackle certain deferred maintenance issues that will allow us to make improvements to the exterior of City Hall, continued improvements to Thalia Mara Hall, and our Crime Lab. And Councilman Tillman, it's about time that we made some improvements to the Charles Tillman Bridge! This important structure is used by hundreds of school children and neighbors in the Midtown neighborhood and we are finally going to paint that structure and look at installing solar-powered lighting for the walkway.

We will also be making critical improvements to our Fire Garage and our Central Fire Station.

We can't ask other folks to keep their property up, and make sure that the grass and weeds are cut if the city of Jackson can't do the same for their own lots. We have over 200 city-owned lots that we are charged with maintaining and I'm proposing to create a special unit in Parks and Recreation to address city-owned lots in low and moderate income neighborhoods.

Also, we will be moving fourteen positions from Public Works to Parks and Recreation to assist with City rights of way clean up and maintenance.

We will be buying two street sweepers which will help us tackle our major thoroughfares and will assist us in meeting the requirements of our regulatory agency's storm water permit.

We are also continuing to streamline our efforts to tackle blight by revising procedures to speed up environmental review on properties that need to be demolished. Our hearing officer will be having more regular hearings, and we will institute concurrent steps in the process to deal with dilapidated properties and overgrown lots.

And I'm very pleased that we will be launching our Public Art Initiative in this new budget year. Not only are we working with the Greater Jackson Arts Council on a project that will transform the hundreds of traffic boxes around our city into works of art, but we are also planning public art for every major capital improvement project, with the public art being valued at 1% of the construction cost. That means that projects like the new JATRAM facility will feature public art. That means that in the vicinity of the new 48" inch water line project, there will be a public art installation. This is going to enhance the character of our city, showcase local artists and help in our beautification efforts.

### **Infrastructure:**

This next budget year we will be wrapping up the \$35 million in water system improvements we started this year. These include the remaining segments of 48" and 54" transmission lines and the installation of a booster station and water tank in South Jackson that will allow us to abandon the well system and provide more reliable water distribution throughout our system. And we will be finishing the design and begin implementation of the water system improvements that will support the Capitol Complex and West Jackson. This will include major water line replacements and the construction of a two million gallon water tank right off of West Capitol Street.

We anticipate signing a consent decree with EPA and will start implementation. This consent decree will have significant financial implications for the City and it will be necessary for us to make provisions to fund improvements. We anticipate borrowing more than \$20 million from State Revolving Loan Programs to begin making improvements to our wastewater treatment facility, and to our two water treatment facilities.

We will also begin the Capitol Street two-waying project in this budget year, as well as continue the Fortification Street Project, complete the Dr. Jesse Mosley Drive Project, complete the design for the extension of the Lynch Street/Parkway Project, complete the Fondren enhancements and design the West Street Project that includes replacing a major water line.

This year, we are proposing to allocate \$1.6 million to street repaving and replacing critical bridges in the city of Jackson. We are also setting aside an additional \$450,000 for pothole repair and in-house paving, bringing our total to over \$2 million for streets improvements.

We are also developing a plan to improve and add new bus stops for our JATRAM riders.

We will start our water meter replacement program and our utility billing project in the coming year as well. The meter replacement program will not only allow us to become more efficient, but it will generate revenue that will allow us to make additional water system upgrades.

We are also working to reduce energy costs at city facilities and public libraries by retrofitting them using energy efficiency technology. This program is funded through grant dollars.

## **Jobs for Jacksonians**

Our effort to support the Jobs for Jacksonians initiative will certainly remain a priority in the coming budget year. We are going to continue to develop a registry of citizens who would like our assistance in their efforts to find work. Already, in the past two weeks, we've had more than 100 citizens call 601-961-4JOB and we're working to share their information with potential employers and service providers.

We are creating a Jobs for Jacksonians Program Coordinator who will work with individuals and help us make this initiative more effective. And we are going to track our success!

We are going to continue to work with our private developers, contractors and others who do business with the city of Jackson and encourage them to hire Jacksonians. And we are going to use City programs, such as the Senior Aides Program, the Transitional Jobs Program and the Fresh Start Program to put our people to work as well.

And I'm very pleased to report that this budget also continues to support our young people through the Summer Youth Employment Program. We've kept the City's commitment to hire 200 young people and we are more than confident that we can convince the private sector to match the city's commitment and hire an additional 200 young people next summer as well.

## **In Economic Development**

We will continue to provide important grant dollars to small businesses across our city with our nationally-recognized Storefront Improvement and Small Business Development Grant programs. These grant dollars ensure our small businesses can improve and remain competitive.

We will begin to bring forward important land use changes and other zoning matters suggested by the Highway 80 Economic Development Strategy to continue the important momentum we have going on Highway 80.

And speaking of Highway 80, we will have new city offices at Metrocenter in the new budget year that will continue to prime the pump on the mall's revitalization.

We will also have some major development projects come on line in the new budget year, such as the Entergy plant purchase in the Northwest Industrial Park and we will continue to work with developers and others on projects such as the District at Eastover, the Old Capitol Green Project and the Mississippi Healthcare Corridor.

I have also provided City Council my proposal to improve JATRAM operations. These recommendations do not propose any reduction in staffing, but would combine some routes. We are also purchasing additional para-transit buses to meet the needs of our disabled ridership. We currently have eight, and with the addition of four we will get in the current budget year and the

four we have in the new budget, our fleet will be double the number we have today. This is going to go a long way in improving our system.

The fact of the matter is we face another lean budget year. However, we have already come through two very lean budget years since I returned to office without having to lay off or furlough city employees, without having to cut city services and without having to raise the taxes of a single Jackson resident. At the same time, we've seen our bonding agencies raise our water and sewer revenue bond ratings. We've seen our bonding agencies raise our general obligation bond ratings, and we've seen no less than a half dozen national media outlets and organizations tout our local economy and other important aspects of our city. Ladies and gentlemen we are doing something right here in Jackson!

I hope we can continue the course in this next budget year to tackle the important challenges that remain in the city of Jackson and to continue to improve the quality of life for our citizens. My administration's continued focus on being an excellent steward of tax dollars remains at the forefront of what we do.

I look forward to working with the City Council in the coming weeks.

I thank the citizens of Jackson for their continued confidence in my administration, our department directors and other city staff.

As Mayor of the city of Jackson, I also thank you for your continued support.

I thank you all for coming.

God bless you.